

Teachers' conceptions about the child's developmental needs: A structural analysis

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Abstract

© 2016 Lynch and Salikhova. Educational practice should be based on the developmental needs of the student, but teacher training rarely focuses on the link between those needs and practice. The aim of the present study was to investigate what teachers think about the needs of students. In this initial report of research on teachers' beliefs, 247 practicing teachers from the Republic of Tatarstan, recruited from continuing education/recertification classes conducted in Kazan, Russia, responded to a list of 26 statements drawn from Self-determination theory (SDT), Maslow's hierarchical theory of needs, and several other sources, rank-ordering them in terms of their importance for the child's healthy psychological development. The article presents the rank-ordering of teachers' beliefs about student needs as well as the factor structure of those needs. Two needs from SDT (relatedness, competence) ranked more highly than Maslow's needs, but, unexpectedly, teachers ranked the need for meaning most highly. Results indicated that autonomy was valued less than most other candidate needs, and, additionally, an unexpected factor structure emerged. The paper, which suggests caution when testing and utilizing existing constructs in new cultural contexts, will be of interest to researchers and educators alike as they work to strengthen the link between student needs and educational practice.

Keywords

Child development, Education, Psychological needs, Teacher beliefs